

INL-MIT collaborate on proposal development

With nearly 50 proposals already selected, Idaho National Laboratory staff members are continuing to add collaborative work with prestigious universities to a successful Faculty Staff Exchange (FSE) Program.

One high profile success has been the relationship with Professor Ron Ballinger from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. INL researcher Dr. Richard Wright has worked closely during the past year with Professor Ballinger to develop proposals in support of the INL nuclear mission in the materials research area. His interaction with Professor Ballinger is supported in part through his role in leading research efforts for the Materials and Nuclear Fuels Scientific Signature.

Wright said, "Ballinger's expertise in nuclear materials assisted INL's technical development for materials used in advanced reactors, as well as nuclear power plant life extension."

Their collaboration during fiscal year (FY) 2007 produced a Collaborative Nuclear Energy Research Initiative (C-NERI) proposal. Although the C-NERI proposal was not funded, it resulted in a funded effort during FY 2008 and included collaboration on Next Generation Nuclear Plant (NGNP) research among MIT, Boise State University, University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV), University of Illinois and INL.

Ballinger emphasized, "The project team has unique skill sets that are complementary. The collaboration will explore the behavior of advanced heat exchanger materials for the NGNP over the complete operating envelope of the system. The materials studied will include both the current baseline material, alloy 617, as well as other potential materials such as alloy 230. The collaboration will involve support of students working with INL scientists."

The year-long discussions and collaborations between Wright and Ballinger also have resulted in Wright being named a research affiliate with the Nuclear Engineering Department at MIT. It also offered opportunities for each person to regularly visit the other institution. Wright has been to MIT several times during the past year or so, while Ballinger spends one week a month at INL.

Since 2006, INL management has strengthened the FSE program to ensure vibrant links between INL researchers and university faculty members with needed expertise. A pilot effort was started in FY2006 when 13 awards were issued and followed by 15 new awards in FY2007, when the program was fully implemented.

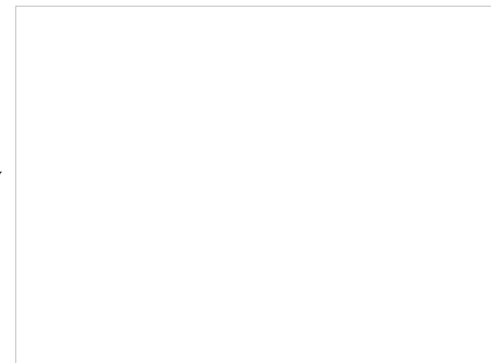
"We are excited with the growth of the Faculty Staff Exchange program here at INL. From 2006 to date we have funded 45 proposals, totaling over \$1.47 million for collaboration development in environment, energy, nuclear programs and national and homeland security," said Anne Mollberg, Education Programs Lead and FSE Program Manager.

This new project simply would not have happened without the effective participation and guidance by Ballinger and Wright. It also affords the opportunity for INL to meet students who may be a right fit for any open position here at the laboratory.

Media Contact:

Keith Arterburn, (208) 526-4845

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MIT Professor Ron Ballinger (left) and INL researcher Dr. Richard Wright (right) discuss their collaborative efforts in the INL Materials Laboratory.